



GENESIS KICKSTART FUND

Impact Report

2023

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INTRODUCTION



In 2020, the Genesis Foundation responded with two major funding initiatives to the crisis caused for creative professionals by the pandemic.

The first, announced in July 2020, was the Genesis Covid-19 Artists Fund, which provided £100,000 in emergency funding to freelance artists participating in Genesis Foundation programmes run in partnership with the Almeida Theatre, LAMDA, the National Theatre, the Young Vic and The Sixteen.

Three months later, in a strategically conceived initiative, came the launch of the Genesis Kickstart Fund. Distributing a total of £1million in project grants, it aimed to enable outstanding freelance artists to stay on their career paths and explore new possibilities in a world radically altered by Covid-19. The Genesis Kickstart Fund would distribute project grants in phases and all projects would be completed by March 2023.

The plan for the Genesis Kickstart Fund had taken shape rapidly. It was inspired by a public discussion that had taken place earlier in October between the conductor Sir Simon Rattle and the Lord Mayor of the City of London, Alderman William Russell. They were engaging in a Cultural Conversation, part of a City of London series sponsored by the Genesis Foundation. As they assessed the impact of Covid-19 on the classical music industry, Sir Simon Rattle said: “Unless the arts are supported, unless there is a bridge, you will not have an artistic industry here [in London] anymore.” Hearing those words, John Studzinski, founder and chairman of the Genesis Foundation, decided to play a part in building that bridge – and in extending it to the entire UK.

Within a month of the initial announcement, the Foundation had assembled an Advisory Council of 30 leading figures from the arts and creative industries, and in May 2021 – **following 200 nominations by members of the Advisory Council, and a detailed and methodical process of assessment against specific criteria, 95 applications received funding** – the first phase of grants, funding 41 projects, was announced. Further rounds of funding were allocated in September 2021 and March 2022, and all 95 projects had been completed by March 2023.



THE GENESIS KICKSTART FUND:

**A CREATIVE
INVESTMENT
IN CREATIVE
PROFESSIONALS**

JOHN STUDZINSKI CBE

The Genesis Kickstart Fund, totalling £1million in grants, represents the Genesis Foundation's single largest investment in its 22 years of nurturing the careers of creative professionals. Its magnitude was a reflection of the exceptional – indeed unprecedented – circumstances which prompted its creation. That scale was also an expression of our strategic ambitions for the fund: to mitigate the risk of losing outstanding creative talent through lack of opportunity, and to encourage the creation of the cultural memory of tomorrow.


In October 2020, when the fund was launched, the UK had been partially paralysed by the pandemic for six months. The livelihoods and career prospects of both young and established professionals in the arts had been placed in jeopardy. Freelancers, such an important force and resource in the creative industries, were especially adversely affected.

The fund was designed to engender vital new opportunities for creative professionals through paid work on exciting, innovative, well-structured projects all over the UK. Beyond that, the fund aimed to stimulate participants' resourcefulness, enhance their resilience, and facilitate their access to wider professional networks, all valuable assets when it comes to sustaining a productive career.

There are challenges to making a career in any sector or industry, but artistic and cultural endeavour is notoriously precarious. The threat of Covid-19 has now largely slipped from the public consciousness, but the pandemic still haunts creative professionals, particularly the substantial cohort of freelancers. In Autumn 2022, the [Campaign for the Arts](#) reported that attendance for most art forms had not recovered to pre-pandemic levels. In 2023, the repercussions of war in Ukraine and other economic pressures are limiting possibilities and cramping lives as the cost of living continues to rise. Compounding this wider instability is the unpredictability of public funding for the arts: even prestigious, established organisations that are fulfilling the expectations of the funding bodies can no longer rely on continuity. Amidst this turbulence, philanthropy undoubtedly has a growing role to play in sustaining the creative industries, not least when it comes to fostering talent for the present and the future.

The aim of this impact report, now that all the Kickstart projects have been completed, is to assess what the Genesis Kickstart Fund has achieved. It explores a strategic, targeted model of philanthropy based on the expertise and the backing of creative leaders, built to inject funding in specific projects, hopefully with a lasting impact in the creative professionals' career, skill development and self-esteem.

In 2021, the creative industries contributed a massive [£109 billion](#) to the UK economy. In the greater scheme of things, £1million might seem a comparatively small sum, but the Genesis Kickstart Fund stands to have played a direct and transformative role in the careers of more than 1000 freelance creative professionals. It has also played a transformative role for the Genesis Foundation, prompting us to look differently at the future and to apply a further entrepreneurial drive in our activities. The grants distributed by the Genesis Kickstart Fund may have come to an end, but it has already given rise to a wealth of new beginnings.

A photograph of John Studzinski, Founder & Chairman of Genesis Foundation, speaking at a podium. He is wearing a dark green coat and holding a microphone. The background is blurred, showing other people in a public setting.

John Studzinski
Founder & Chairman, Genesis Foundation

A close-up photograph of a man with a beard and short hair, wearing a blue button-down shirt over a red tank top. He has a crown of string lights on his head, which are illuminated with a bright blue and white light. The background is dark and out of focus, showing another person's face. The overall mood is artistic and experimental.

CONTEXT

“Without a rapid injection of support, the freelancers who sustain and energise the UK creative sector will become a lost generation. We simply cannot afford to abandon them.”

**Rebecca Salter
President, Royal Academy of Arts**



Freelancers in the UK's creative industries

It is estimated by the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) that there are [more than two million](#) people in the UK are employed in the creative industries. Self-employment accounts for approximately [30% of all employment](#) in the sector, about double the proportion for the economy as a whole. In 2019, according to the estimates of UK Theatre and the Society of London Theatre, freelancers formed almost [50% of the UK's theatre workforce](#), and in its 2021 [report](#) The UK Creative Industries: Unleashing the power and potential of creativity, the Creative UK Group (Creative England and the Creative Industries Federation), judged that **freelancers comprised a substantial majority, 70%, of the workforce across music, performing and visual arts.**

The impact of the pandemic

The lockdowns of 2020 and 2021 had a radical effect on nearly all industries, but the impact on live arts was catastrophic. Between January 2020 and January 2021, the economic output (GVA/gross value add) of music/performing arts/visual arts declined by 35%. By December 2020, the Creative Industries Policy & Evidence Centre, in collaboration with the Centre for Cultural Value was writing: “[...] the shift in numbers working in music, performing and visual arts occupations is clearly significant. The number of workers in these occupations dropped from around 200,000 in January-March to around 145,000 in July-September, a decline of almost 30% since pre-lockdown [...]. This suggests that the trend for growth in freelance employment, as part of a growing creative economy sector, has stalled as a result of the pandemic. In particular, **the number of freelancers in all creative occupations declined by around 38,000 from the start of 2020.**”

Aid measures

When the first national lockdown was announced in March 2020, Arts Council England (ACE), with support from the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) and HM Treasury, announced the Emergency Response Fund (ERF). The Fund was designed to alleviate immediate pressures on both individual creative practitioners and organisations (many of which provide employment to freelancers), to enable the continuation of creative activity, and to allow time to stabilise and plan for the future. Freelance creative practitioners were eligible to apply for direct awards of up to £2,500.

In the Spring of 2020, through the ERF, Arts Council England provided over £100 million of funding support to nearly 10,000 applicants (c7,500 individuals and c2,500 organisations). The Culture Recovery Fund (CRF), launched in July 2020, formed part of the Government's £1.57 billion package to protect Britain's world-class cultural, arts and heritage institutions. The Fund, which allocated over £1 billion in funding between November 2020 and March 2022 was not open to direct applications from freelance creative practitioners.

Government support was complemented by independent initiatives, such as the Theatre Artists Fund, launched in July 2020. Spearheaded by theatre and film director Sam Mendes, it amassed some £7.8 million from a diversity of trusts, foundations, corporates and private individuals and distributed monies to some 8,000 freelance theatre professionals.

Freelancers at risk

Many freelance creative professionals found themselves falling through the gaps in government support. In June 2020 the Big Freelancers Survey (conducted by Stage Directors UK, Freelancers Make Theatre Work and Curtain Call, and attracting 8000 respondents) found that 36% of the freelance workforce in the performing arts received no support from the government's Self-Employment Income Support Scheme or Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme. By September 2020, a survey of 2,000 members of the Musicians' Union found that financial difficulties caused by the pandemic were causing 34% of respondents to consider abandoning the industry completely. "Musicians are working in supermarkets, being Deliveroo drivers, going back to things they trained for early in life," said the general secretary of the Musicians' Union. That being said, many creative professionals continued to practise their art or craft with the help of digital media. As John Studzinski wrote in his Genesis Foundation blog in May 2021: "Throughout the pandemic, many artists have continued to find ways to express themselves and to seek and satisfy audiences. They have demonstrated resourcefulness and resilience to match their creativity. Sadly, they have frequently been working for minimal or no financial reward."

In early 2021 the [Coronavirus Financial Impact Tracker Survey](#) provided insight into the situation of people, dubbed 'the excluded', who were unable to benefit from either the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme or the Self-Employment Income Support Scheme (SEISS). It found that **people working in arts, entertainment and recreation were twice as likely to be 'excluded' as the rest of the population.**

Later in 2021, the Creative Industries Federation summed up the situation: "**The COVID crisis has exposed and emphasised the fragility of the freelance model**, with many freelancers witnessing their work (and income) dry up overnight [...]. The height of the pandemic might be over and we might be descending the peak but that doesn't mean we can take our foot off the gas when it comes to protecting, nurturing and bolstering our integral freelance workforce."



METHODOLOGY & TIMELINE



The launch of the Genesis Kickstart Fund was preceded in July 2020, just a few months into the first lockdown period, by the launch of the Genesis Covid-19 Artists Fund. This was the Genesis Foundation's emergency response to the unprecedented risk of talent loss for the creative industries. At John Studzinski's initiative, £100,000 was distributed, via the Genesis Foundation's partner organisations, the National Theatre, the Young Vic, the Almeida, LAMDA, and The Sixteen to freelance artists in the Genesis network whose livelihoods were threatened by lockdown.

The Genesis Foundation started working on a more ambitious funding programme through which the Foundation would support freelance creative professionals beyond its immediate partner network.

“The Genesis Kickstart Fund grew out of our response to the pandemic, but we have always been looking to the longer term. Beyond enabling paid work on worthwhile, innovative projects, the grants are about nurturing resourcefulness and resilience – and developing ideas and momentum in a dramatically changed environment.”

John Studzinski
Founder & Chairman, Genesis Foundation



The Foundation gathered key artistic leaders to form an Advisory Council. From **Barbara Broccoli** to **Benedict Cumberbatch**, **Grayson Perry** to **Kathryn McDowell**, 32 personalities from the creative industries joined the Genesis Kickstart Fund Advisory Council and were assigned to five disciplinary sub-committees:

- Music & Opera
- Theatre & Film
- Photography & Visual Arts
- Dance
- Arts Champions

Each member of the Advisory Council was then asked to nominate up to five creative professionals with the potential to drive projects enabled by the Genesis Kickstart Fund. The nominees were required to match the following criteria:

- Aged 18-plus and based in the UK,
- Currently undertaking or planning projects involving three or more freelance artists, and
- Able to show a track record of artistic excellence or show exceptional artistic potential.

THE ADVISORY COUNCIL



MICHAEL ARMITAGE
Artist, RA Elect



SAMUEL BARNETT
Actor,
Genesis LAMDA Scholar



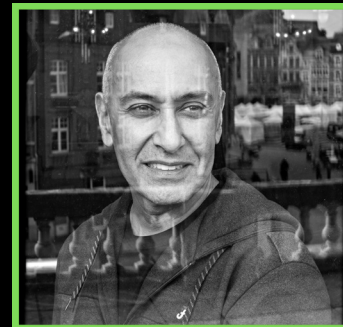
EMMA BOWKETT
Director of Photography,
FT Magazine



BARBARA BROCCOLI CBE
Producer,
EON Productions



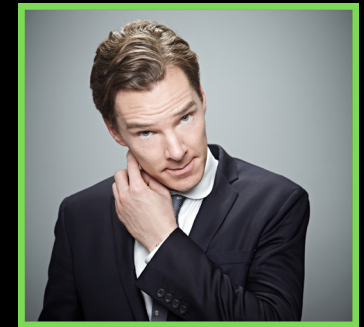
HARRIET CAPALDI
Managing Director,
Genesis Foundation



FAROOQ CHAUDHRY OBE
Co-Founder & Executive
Producer, Akram Khan Company



HARRY CHRISTOPHERS CBE
Founder & Conductor,
The Sixteen



BENEDICT CUMBERBATCH CBE
Actor,
LAMDA President



JAN DALLEY
Arts Editor,
Financial Times



RUPERT GOULD CBE
Artistic Director,
Almeida Theatre



POLLY GRAHAM
Artistic Director, Longborough Festival
Opera; Genesis Opera Director



TANYA JOSEPH
Board Member,
London Philharmonic Orchestra



KWAME KWEI-ARMAH OBE
Artistic Director,
Young Vic Theatre



DAVID LAN CBE
Writer,
Theatre Producer



CHRIS LEVINE
Artist



SIR JAMES MACMILLAN CBE
Composer



KATHRYN MCDOWELL CBE
Managing Director,
London Symphony Orchestra



FRANCES MORRIS CBE
Director,
Tate Modern



JAMIE NJOKU-GOODWIN
Chief Executive,
UK Music



RUFUS NORRIS
Artistic Director,
National Theatre



RENEE ODJIDJA
Curator: Youth Programmes,
Whitechapel Gallery



SIR GRAYSON PERRY CBE RA
Hon FRIBA
Artist



STINA QUAGEBEUR
Dancer & Choreographer,
English National Ballet



JEMMA READ
Head of Philanthropy,
Bloomberg



ABUKABAR SALIM
Actor,
Genesis LAMDA Scholar



REBECCA SALTER PRA
President,
Royal Academy of Arts



ABDUL SHAYEK
Artistic Director & Joint CEO,
Tara Arts



YINKA SHONIBARE CBE RA
Artist



JOHN STUDZINSKI CBE
Founder & Chairman,
Genesis Foundation



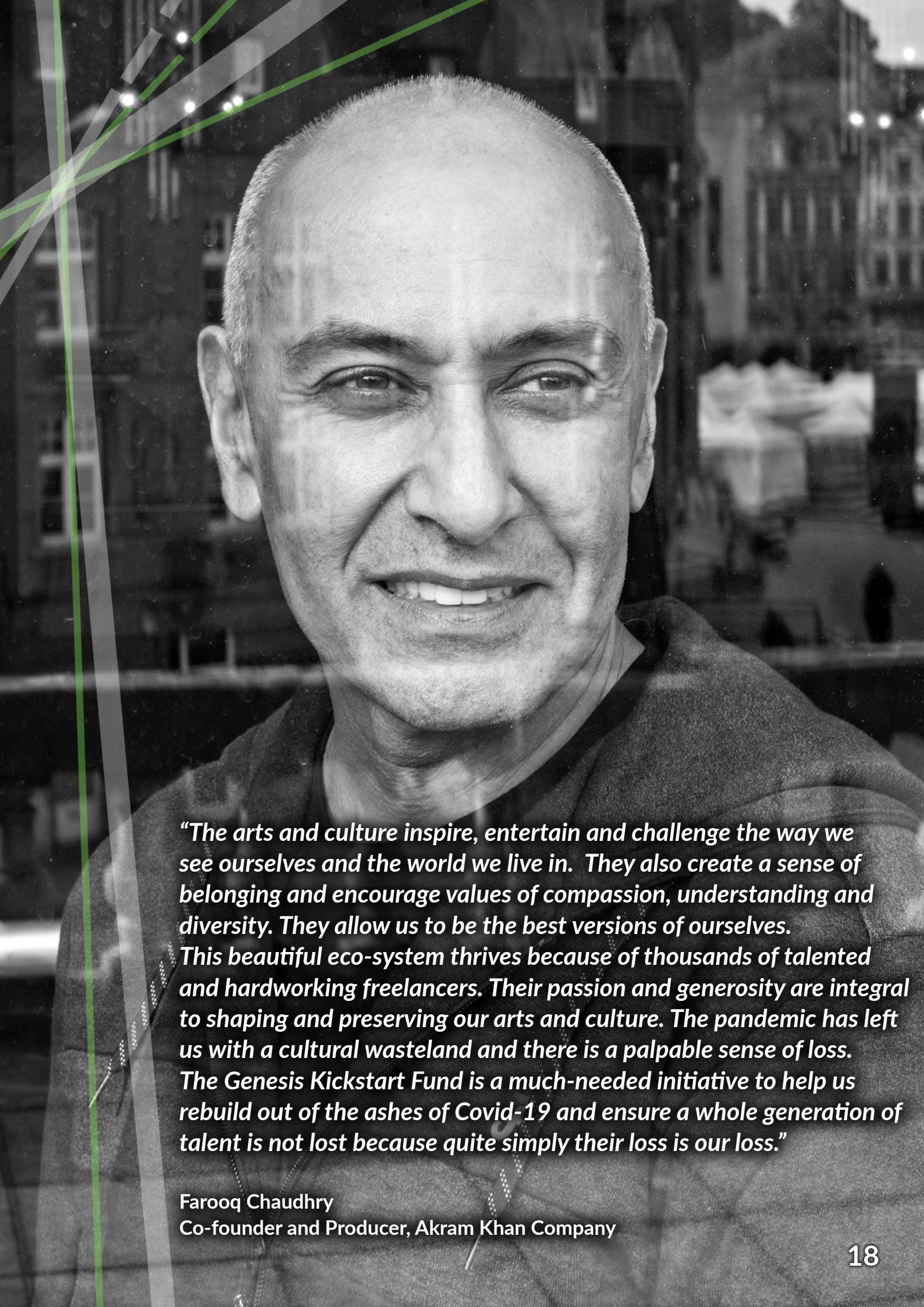
DAME JANET SUZMAN
Actress, Director
LAMDA Vice-President



**VERONICA WADLEY,
BARONESS FLEET**
Co-Founder and Chair,
London Music Fund



MARIE-SOPHIE WILLIS
Chief Executive,
The Sixteen



“The arts and culture inspire, entertain and challenge the way we see ourselves and the world we live in. They also create a sense of belonging and encourage values of compassion, understanding and diversity. They allow us to be the best versions of ourselves. This beautiful eco-system thrives because of thousands of talented and hardworking freelancers. Their passion and generosity are integral to shaping and preserving our arts and culture. The pandemic has left us with a cultural wasteland and there is a palpable sense of loss. The Genesis Kickstart Fund is a much-needed initiative to help us rebuild out of the ashes of Covid-19 and ensure a whole generation of talent is not lost because quite simply their loss is our loss.”

Farooq Chaudhry
Co-founder and Producer, Akram Khan Company

The Genesis Foundation stipulated that the portfolio of Genesis Kickstart Fund projects should be geographically and socially diverse, covering all four countries of the UK and including people from a wide range of socio-economic, ethnic and religious backgrounds; this intention was made clear to all Advisory Council members before the nomination process.

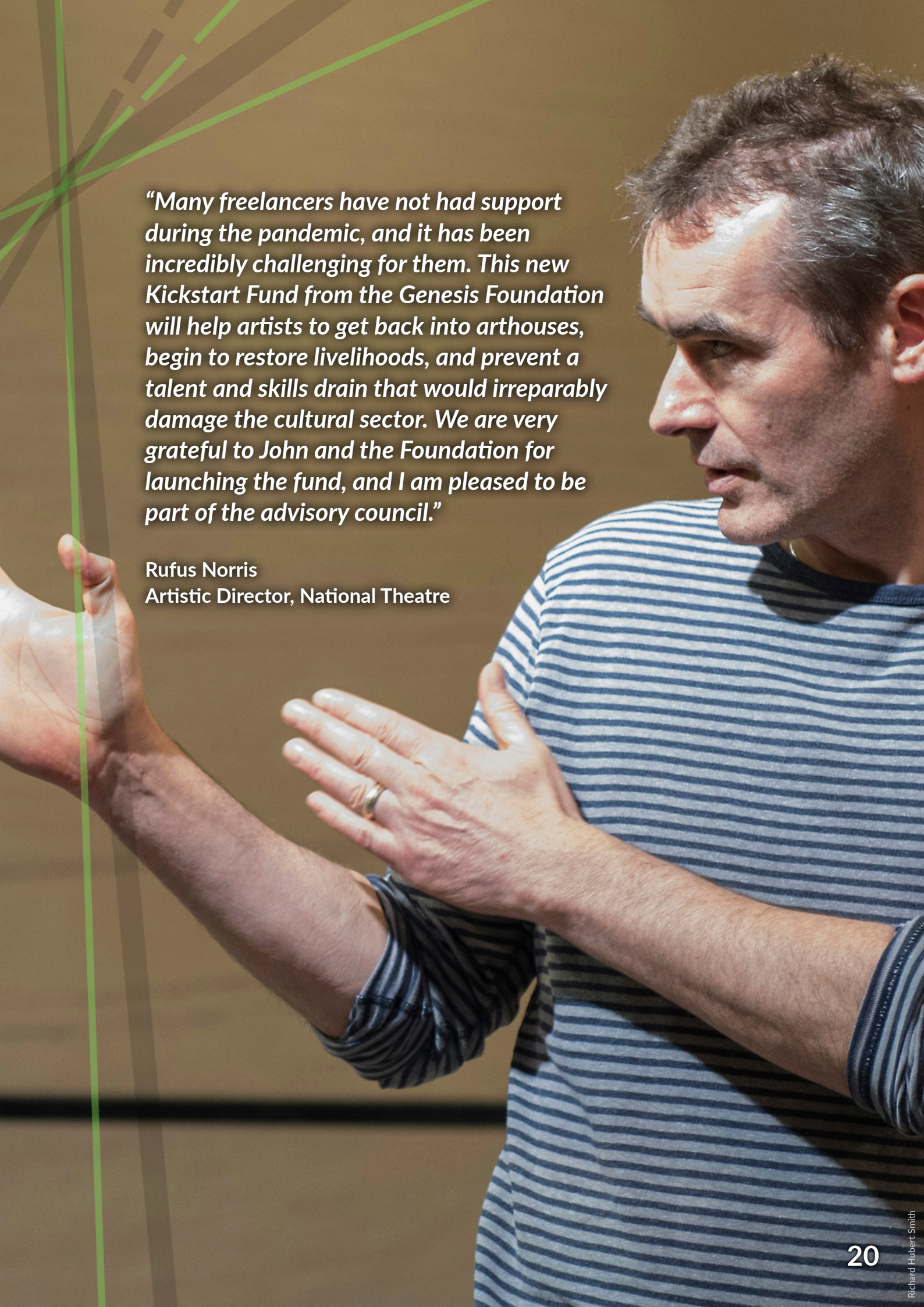
The Genesis Foundation subsequently invited all artists, nominated by members of the Advisory Council, to apply to receive a £10,000 Genesis Kickstart Fund grant. The GKF grant had to make up for the major part of a project's funding.

The application form was rigorously structured, so that applicants could demonstrate very clearly their project's compliance with the Genesis Kickstart Fund's criteria.

Each application was then scored independently against four criteria by three members of the Advisory Council, each of whom had specialist knowledge relevant to the project. The four criteria were:

- Quality
- Innovation
- Value for money
- Benefit to society

In total, 113 applications were received, and 95 of them were successful. The vast majority of projects received a £10,000 grant, while the existing Genesis Foundation partners and a couple of particularly ambitious projects in scope and quantity of freelancers involved received £20,000.

A man with short brown hair, wearing a blue and white horizontally striped t-shirt, is shown from the chest up in profile, facing left. He is gesturing with both hands, palms facing each other, as if in the middle of a conversation or presentation. The background is a plain, light-colored wall. In the top left corner, there are several thin, intersecting lines in shades of green and grey, creating a geometric pattern.

“Many freelancers have not had support during the pandemic, and it has been incredibly challenging for them. This new Kickstart Fund from the Genesis Foundation will help artists to get back into arthouses, begin to restore livelihoods, and prevent a talent and skills drain that would irreparably damage the cultural sector. We are very grateful to John and the Foundation for launching the fund, and I am pleased to be part of the advisory council.”

Rufus Norris
Artistic Director, National Theatre

2020

October 2020

John Studzinski sets up the
Genesis Kickstart Fund

March 2020

First UK lockdown:
performing arts venues close

55,000 arts jobs lost between
March and December 2020
(Arts Professionals).

March 2021

Deadline for application review
by AC members, scoring against
criteria:
Quality,
Innovation,
Value for Money,
Benefit to Society

December 2020

Advisory Council members
nominate projects

2021

September 2021

Second round:
19 projects awarded grants

January 2021

Genesis Foundation
management reviews
nominations
Nominees invited to apply to
GKF

May 2021

First round:
40 projects awarded grants

2022

September 2022

Grant funding completed

March 2022

Third round:
36 projects awarded grants

March 2023

All projects completed

2023

Three rounds of funding in March, May and September 2021, enabled all projects to reach completion by March 2023.

In the period from May 2021 to March 2023, (the deadline for the completion of all Genesis Kickstart Fund projects), the Genesis Foundation team worked with all 95 lead artists (or project leads), following up and promoting every project as it came to fruition. The Foundation promoted the projects on social media and via a bespoke Genesis Foundation Newsletter, GKF NEWS, involving the Genesis Kickstart Fund Community, lead artists and members of the advisory council.

“One positive that has emerged from the pandemic is the sense of solidarity and community fostered between makers and champions across the cultural sector. The Genesis Foundation’s new £1m fund, following its Covid-19 Artists Fund launched earlier in the year, typifies this and offers another example of where John Studzinski is leading the way. So many artists, at all levels, are experiencing a real crisis right now and giving genuine consideration to leaving the industry. This fund will get financial support to those artists in need and I am honoured to be joining the commissioning panel.”

Rupert Goad
Artistic Director, Almeida Theatre

KEY FINDINGS



The Genesis Kickstart Fund, responding quickly, efficiently and responsibly to an unprecedented crisis for the sector, achieved its ambitious mission of enabling creative, paid opportunities for over 1,000 freelance creative professionals across the United Kingdom.

The 95 projects embraced initiatives in urban and rural areas across England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland; they focused in large part on the production of live events, but most had an online component in order to maximise audience reach and diversity.

Choral singing, theatre, music recording, dance, photography, film-making, gaming, sculpture, poetry, arts education, community singing: the range of projects enabled by the Genesis Kickstart Fund is wide and diverse. The endorsement of lead artists by a member of the Advisory Council guaranteed a degree of quality to the work. It meant that the Genesis Foundation enabled the work of freelance creative professionals that showed real talent and promise but were very much at risk of leaving the industry in the context of the pandemic, job scarcity, and general lack of support to that workforce.



THE GKF IMPACT SURVEY

As part of the evaluation process, the Genesis Foundation distributed a survey to be completed by every artist who had participated in a GKF project. The two sets of questions – one for freelance creative professionals and the other for organisations – focused on the impact the Genesis Kickstart Fund had on careers, skills and employment, and views on the creative sector.

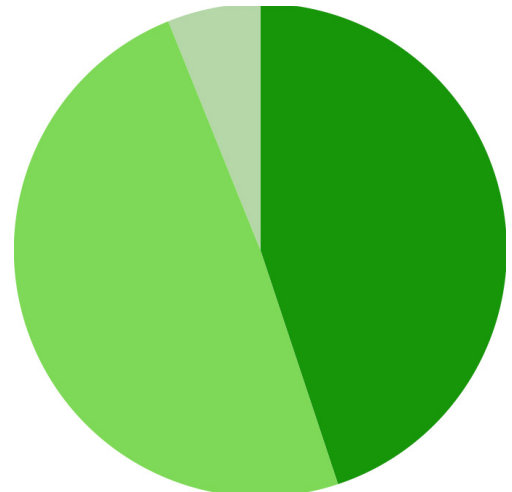


FREELANCE CREATIVE PROFESSIONALS

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

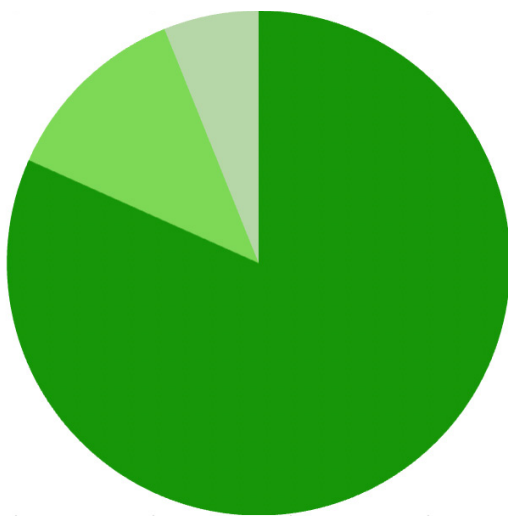
94%

of respondents said that their GKF project had helped them stay on track with their creative career at a time of crisis in the cultural sector.



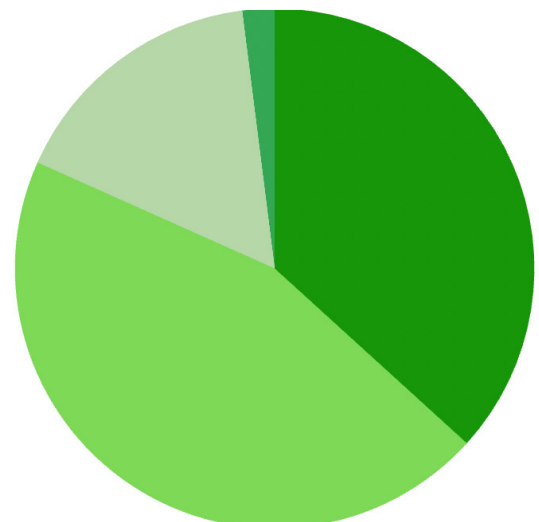
94%

of respondents said that the Covid-19 crisis threatened their livelihood as a creative professional.



82%

of respondents said that the experience of their GKF project had better equipped them to deal with the challenges of making a career in the creative sector in light of the past three years.

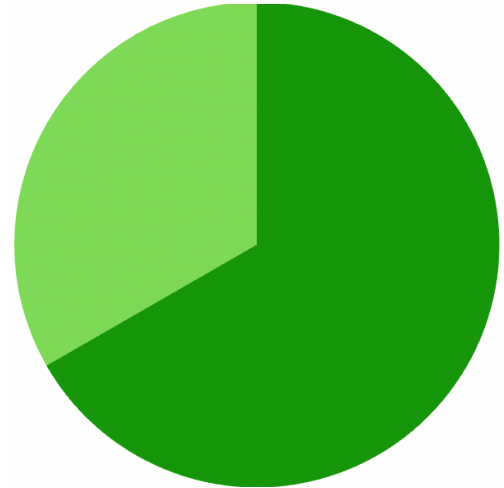


ORGANISATIONS

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

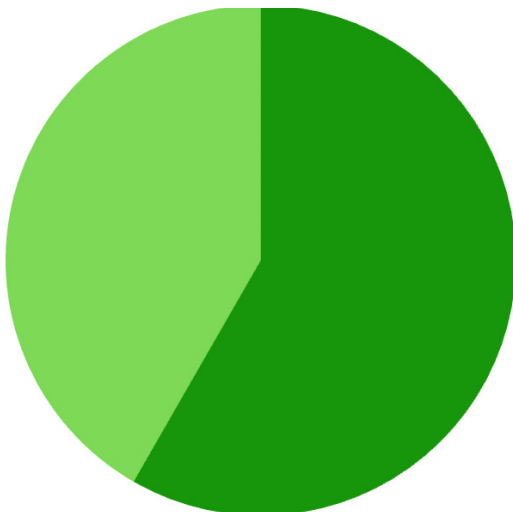
100%

said that working on a GKF project had enabled new skills to be built within the organisation.



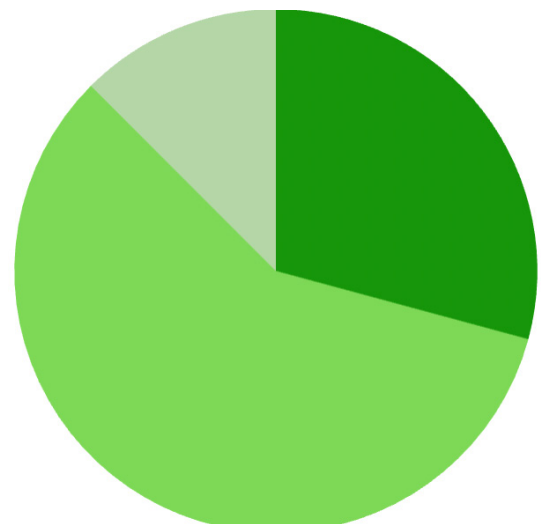
100%

of respondents said that the GKF had resulted in, or contributed towards, further creative opportunities or relationships for the freelancers involved in the project.



86%

of respondents said that their experience of the GKF-funded project had helped to prepare the organisation for the challenges it faces in the post-Covid era.



CASE STUDIES



Women, Beware the Devil
Lulu Raczka

FREELANCE CREATIVE PROFESSIONALS



Exploring Queer Identity

Jonathan Watkins

In March 2023, Director and Choreographer **Jonathan Watkins** led a week-long R&D with six queer-identifying dancers for his project titled **Exploring Queer Identity**. The group used movement and storytelling tools to form physical representations of queer identity and queer activism throughout history.

All four artists involved in this project who completed the GKF Impact Survey agreed that the R&D had improved their professional confidence and resilience, and enabled them to build new skills that they will use in their future careers.



Motherhood: Song Cycle

Sophie Winter

Theatre Maker and Musician **Sophie Winter** led a three-month course for new mothers based in Stroud and Gloucester called **Motherhood: Song Cycle**, during which participants worked with Sophie and Singer-Songwriter **Lisa Jen Brown** to create three songs on what it means to be a Mum. The course culminated in a performance on Mothering Sunday of 2023 for friends and family.

"It was a hugely important step in my career to be given this funding, not least because it was awarded during the Covid crisis, but also because 18 months ago I became a mum for the first time [...]. The verbal and written feedback from participants has been so positive that I will be applying for more funding in the future to continue the project, ideally turning it into a rolling scheme and expanding into new areas".



Here Lies

Tala Lee-Turton

Throughout 2022, Dancer **Tala Lee-Turton** developed **Here Lies**, a 10-minute dance and physical theatre duet between a dancer and a cellist. Made in collaboration with **Sheffield General Cemetery**, the project explored unrecorded women's lives buried in the cemetery's graves.

After presenting the work to an audience of industry professionals at **Yorkshire Dance** in September 2022, the piece has been booked at **Northern Ballet's** Stanley & Audrey Burton Theatre and **Sheffield Theatre's** Studio for Autumn 2023.

ORGANISATIONS (LARGE)



Best Seat in Your House Young Vic

Best Seat in Your House is a series of live-streamed productions by the **Young Vic**, filmed through multiple cameras placed throughout the theatre's auditorium, with audiences able to choose from which camera angle they view the show. Captions, audio description and British Sign Language are available for every performance. Previous Young Vic productions live-streamed via Best Seat in Your House include *Mandela* (2023), *Best of Enemies* (2022) and *Changing Destiny* (2021).

"With Best Seat in Your House, we've taken a bold step into the future of the theatre-streaming experience. We've put choice at the heart of every element, giving audiences the space to engage with our streamed work in an entirely new way."

Kwame Kwei-Armah, Artistic Director



Jungle Book Reimagined Akram Khan Company

Jungle Book Reimagined is a new dance-theatre production by **Akram Khan Company** based on the original story of Rudyard Kipling's much-loved family classic, with the journey of Mowgli reinvented through the eyes of a climate refugee.

The Genesis Kickstart Fund supported the research and development of this production, which premiered at the **Curve Theatre** in Leicester, before touring across the UK, Europe, Canada and the US.

It received a 5-star review from [The Stage](#), and 4 stars from [Broadway World](#).



All the Ends of the World The Sixteen

All the Ends of the World was an hour-long concert, performed by **The Sixteen** and violinist **Lizzie Ball**, which explored the impact of climate change on our planet.

The concert took place at both **Southwark Cathedral** and **Rochester Cathedral** across two evenings in October 2022, and featured artist **Luke Jerram's** 'Gaia': a slowly rotating, floating art installation reflecting the Earth's surface, designed to portray the beauty and true nature of our planet.

Classic FM featured Lizzie Ball playing under the globe installation at Southwark Cathedral on its social media channels.

ORGANISATIONS (SMALL)



TRACES SANSARA

SANSARA choir recorded a new album, entitled **TRACES**, which included choral works by British, German and Ukrainian composers, all responding to the question: How do we find inner peace in a world of conflict and division? The album was released in March 2022 and was selected by **Gramophone Magazine** as its Editor's Choice for the April issue.

"A powerful programme of thought-provoking works, both timely and timeless, the impeccable performances by SANSARA drawing us in and holding us throughout the deeply reflective journey".

The tracks on the recording formed a wider podcast series titled 'Traces of the White Rose', also supported by the Genesis Kickstart Fund.



Five-a-side Blueprint Theatre and Film Company

Five-a-side is a short film produced by **Blueprint Theatre and Film Company** which highlights all the positive aspects of the five-a-side football community, focusing on the game's mental and physical health benefits in the aftermath of COVID-19. Set to be released in Summer 2023, the film will have a response poem narrated over it, alongside an original score.

"[GKF] has been one of the most important events for us as a company. It has allowed us to challenge and stretch ourselves creatively, technically, and artistically. The whole experience since receiving the grant has been overwhelmingly positive. The support we have received, and the confidence shown in us has enabled us to enrich not only ourselves but hopefully the world that our project is about." **Mark Rose**, Director




Opera for Young Hearts OperaEd

Workshop provider **OperaEd** ran a series of opera performances of *Hansel and Gretel* for KS2 in schools in Haringey and Enfield as part of their project **Opera for Young Hearts**. The project aimed to inspire and educate a new generation of opera-lovers, who don't currently have access to the art form, through the re-imagined story of a classic fairy tale.

Each performance was preceded by a workshop on music, movement, and set and costume design. Schools were also provided with an "after-care" pack containing resources to enhance music learning, creative writing, wellbeing and design, equipping teachers with the necessary tools to expand the workshop aims in the classroom.

CONCLUSION





“John Studzinski is one of the outstanding philanthropists of his generation with a real knowledge of and interest in young musicians, playwrights and actors. He sets a great example to those who are in the fortunate position of having financial means to donate to the arts. Now, more than ever, support for the next generation of great artists is needed”

Veronica Wadley, Baroness Fleet
Co-Founder and Chair,
London Music Fund

The state of play

In late February 2022, while acknowledging that the global pandemic was not yet over, the UK government published its *Living with Covid-19* guidance. Lifting remaining domestic pandemic-related restrictions, this signalled a return to something like normality after two years of disruption.

Since then, life for the majority of the UK population seems to have gone back to normal and Covid-19 appears only rarely in the news. The pandemic and its lockdowns appear to be a thing of the past. The same, however, cannot be said of the economic pressures that have come in its aftermath, compounded by the ramifications of Russia's incursion into Ukraine (which took place just as Covid restrictions were being relaxed in Britain), and, arguably, of Brexit.

During the pandemic, a wealth of comment, information and statistics was produced on Covid-19's evident impact – and potential future impact – on the creative sector, and on employment opportunities for creative professionals.

In Spring 2023, it is difficult to locate authoritative, recent, quantified data on the enduring effects of the pandemic on the creative industries. At present it is hard to judge whether the feared permanent exodus from the arts of talented, skilled people, especially independent practitioners, has taken place. What is (to use an expression that seems to have had its day) 'the new normal' for freelancers in the creative industries? Projects to research these issues could well be currently underway. They could certainly prove illuminating.

In December 2022, the government paper *Arts and creative industries: The case for a strategy* reported that "growth in the creative industries has been higher than across the whole of the economy since the outbreak of the Covid-19 pandemic." In this instance, as elsewhere in reporting on the creative industries, it is worth remembering that the sector, as defined by the government, has a broad and heterogeneous base: in addition to traditional cultural activities such as music, the performing arts, visual arts, museums and galleries, it extends to such segments as design, fashion, advertising and marketing, film and TV, and IT, software and computer services.

In the main, those traditional cultural activities are not highly lucrative and many arts organisations rely on public and/or philanthropic funding for their viability and sustainability. Moreover, in Spring 2023 [The Audience Agency](#) rang some alarm bells: it reported that **one-third of its research respondents claimed to be attending fewer arts and culture events/venues than pre-pandemic**, and that 60+% were being discouraged from attending cultural events by the cost of living; an even higher percentage were expecting this to remain the case in 6-24 months' time. In addition, **half of the respondents who had previously donated to cultural organisations were expecting to donate less over the coming year.**

The role and implications of the Genesis Kickstart Fund

In light of all this, the Genesis Kickstart Fund demonstrated that positive outcomes for freelance creative professionals, for their audiences, and ultimately for society as whole, can be achieved with even relatively modest levels of philanthropic funding: while the entire Kickstart Fund amounted to £1million, the majority of its project grants were for £10,000.

Crucially, the funds were allocated in a **highly targeted and purposeful manner**, on the basis of rigorous criteria, to project leaders who had been identified and recommended by a council – a network – of knowledgeable people from a diversity of creative and demographic backgrounds. **There is risk involved in any investment, but the chances of these projects' success were raised not only by the grants they received, but by the process through which they were selected and, most fundamentally, by the people who originated and ran them.**

The Genesis Kickstart Fund was conceived as a discrete, tightly-run initiative that would span a fixed period of two-and-a-half years (October 2020 to March 2023). During just over half that time, Covid-19 was preventing life from being 'normal', yet **the creative professionals made good use of their grants in order to achieve their aims, working with skill, dedication, resourcefulness and, of course, creativity.**

The formal assessment of the 95 projects against specific criteria, and the feedback from participating creative professionals and organisations, would suggest i) that the Genesis Kickstart Fund achieved 'proof of model', and ii) that its implications for participants' futures were highly positive.

The Genesis Foundation has learned a great deal from conceiving and running the Genesis Kickstart Fund and very much hopes it will inspire other philanthropic organisations to implement endeavours along similar lines and at a scale appropriate to their ambitions and capabilities.

The way ahead

Careers in the creative sector, even for the most talented and dedicated professionals, can be deeply unpredictable. As the experience of the pandemic demonstrated all too clearly, they can be frighteningly precarious. **The Genesis Kickstart Fund engendered structured opportunities at an exceptionally difficult time and the participants have clearly derived all kinds of value, both immediate and long-term, from their experience.**

Looking to the future, all the participants in Kickstart projects have now been invited to become members of Genesis Connects Directory, an online resource for artists in the Genesis network, enabling them to connect and collaborate with each other.

The extended Genesis network, 22 years into the Genesis Foundation's existence, encompasses thousands of creative professionals. It embodies the Foundation's emphasis on the value of durable working relationships and mentoring. In some respects, Covid-19 has transformed the world, but the fundamental principles and practice of creative endeavour remain reassuringly constant.



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